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WAR MACHINE®

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Fear the REAPER™

JEREMY CARIE '95

BOOP-
BOOP

SHEVA? CAN YOU HEAR ME?

THERE'S SOMEONE HERE TO SEE YOU.

J-J-JIM..?

YEAH, BABE. I'M HERE. IT'S ME.

BOOP-
BOOP

TH-THOUGHT THERE WAS...

... WAS...

... TH-THREE OF YOU FOR A MOMENT THERE...

... Y-Y-YOU HAD *THREE* FACES, JIMBO... THREE FACES...

... ONE OF THEM WAS *METAL* AND ONE OF THEM WAS YOU AND ONE OF THEM WAS...

... SOMETHING, *SOMETHING*, SOMETHING...

S. H. I. E. L. D. RESEARCH INFIRMARY, BAKERSFIELD, CA.

ROOM ONE THIRTEEN, PATIENT ***BATHSHEVA JOSEPH.***

SLOWLY SLIPPING AWAY...

SHHHH, BABE.

DON'T FRET NOW.

TIME WILL TELL

WAITING IN THE HALL FOR NEWS
DAN ABNETT
story
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with FRED HAYNES
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and JOHNNY GREENE
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I'M SORRY I DIDN'T GET HERE SOONER.

I WAS *AWAY.* BUSINESS STUFF.

DOESN'T MATTER.

YOU'RE HERE NOW.

LIFE *SUCKS,* Y'KNOW, RHODES?

I KEEP... KEEP *ZONING* IN AND OUT. LIKE MY MIND IS CYCLING THROUGH MOMENTS FROM MY PAST.

JUST BEFORE YOU CAME IN, I WAS THREE YEARS OLD, AND I'D SKINNED MY KNEE JUMPING ROPE.

WELL, THEY SAY YOUR LIFE FLASHES BE-FORE YOU.

YOU'RE NOT GONNA DIE, SHEVA.

SEZ *YOU,* DOCTOR RHODES. I *AM.* I CAN FEEL IT COMING.

YOU LIKE MY FLOWERS?

JEFFERIES SENT THEM. *SWEET.*

SHOULDN'T BE IN HERE, OF COURSE. POLLEN. I'M GETTING ALLERGIES TO EVERYTHING.

LIKE *LIFE.*

THAT'S A *JOKE,* RHODES.

A WORD, PLEASE?

I'LL BE RIGHT BACK, SHEVA.

LIKE I'M GOING ANYWHERE.

TAKE YOUR TIME...

... BASIC PHYSIOLOGICAL ***COLLAPSE. CHRONIC,*** IN THE ***STRICTEST*** SENSE OF THE WORD. ADD TO THAT THE ***TACTILE HALLU-CINATIONS,*** THE FLASHBACKS...

PROGNOSIS?

IT'S TIME FATIGUE, A DEGENER-ATIVE CONDITION OF ACCELERATED AGING BROUGHT ON BY UNPRO-TECTED TEMPORAL TRANSIT.*

*SEE "ZIETKRIEG!" IN WM #15 TO #17.

IF SHE LIVES TILL MORNING, I'LL BE AMAZED.

LOOK, MR. RHODES, I WISH I COULD HAVE REACHED YOU SOONER. I KNEW YOU'D WANT TO-

NOT YOUR FAULT, AGENT MARTELL. I'VE BEEN OUT OF THE LOOP

I'LL GET COFFEE.

THANKS.

LAST NIGHT, WITH THESE HANDS, I ***SAVED THE WORLD.*** IN GOD'S NAME, WHY CAN'T I DO A ***THING*** TO SAVE ***ONE SINGLE LIFE*** NOW?

SHE'S TIRED, BUT SHE DARE NOT SLEEP.

SHE'S TOO AFRAID OF NOT WAKING UP AGAIN.

THE MONITOR BEEPS.

SHE HEARS HER OWN BREATH.

THERE'S A DULLNESS IN HER EARS. IT'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN AGAIN...

..BANG!

SHE'S THERE. IMAYA, NORTH AFRICA, LAST YEAR.

THE DAY SHIELD AGENT JOSEPH MET WAR MACHINE. MET JIM RHODES.

MAJOR **SHEVA JOSEPH**, STRATEGIC HAZARD INTERVENTION ESPIONAGE LOGISTICS DIRECTORATE. **SHIELD** TO YOU CLOWNS.

FROM THIS MOMENT ON, YOU'RE IN **MY** CUSTODY.

YOU BOYS HAVE MADE QUITE A MESS.

COLONEL FURY IS NOT HAPPY.

BIG BRASSY WORDS. CHUTZPAH. BUT **INSIDE** SHE WAS QUAKING.

WAR MACHINE ... CHROME ARMOR, THE POLISHED FRIGHT-MASK VISOR WITH ITS **BURNING** EYES. TANGIBLE POWER.

AND AN AGENDA THAT, DESPITE HER ORDERS, SHE **SYMPATHIZED** WITH.

REALLY?

AIN'T THAT A **SHAME**.

FACE TO FACE. FLESH TO METAL. STANDOFF, TRIGGER FINGERS TWITCHING.

THE START OF A **BEAUTIFUL** FRIENDSHIP.

LET ME STAY HERE, LET ME STAY...

BUT THE FRAGMENT OF MEMORY SLIPS ASIDE, RUSHING DOWN A TUNNEL TO THE LIGHT...

... RUMBLING LIKE A TRAIN THROUGH HER INNER EAR...

... PLEASE...

... PLEASE...

POP. GONE. FORGOTTEN.

BOOP-
B-OOP

... I'VE GOT A FIVE POINT ON THE BASELINE.

CAN WE IMPROVE IMAGING?

MR. RHODES?

... TRY TO RELAX. WE'LL BE THROUGH IN A MOMENT.

YOU UNDER-STAND WE'RE DUTY-BOUND TO TEST YOU, TOO. YOU WERE CAUGHT IN THE SAME *TIME QUAKE* THAT... *TRIGGERED* MS. JOSEPH'S CONDITION.

YOU THINK I COULD BE LOOKING AT THE SAME PROBLEM?

ANY-THING'S POSSIBLE, MR. RHODES.

NOW TRY TO RELAX.

MARTELL?

CLAYDEN?

COULD YOU -UH- *COME OVER HERE..?*

MOMENTS LATER...

WELL?

I HAVE *EYES*, MARTELL. I SAW THE *LOOKS* YOU GUYS WERE SWAPPING IN THERE.

IT'S REALLY TOO EARLY TO--

LEVEL WITH ME, PLEASE.

PERHAPS *YOU'D* CARE TO DO THE SAME. THAT DIAGNOSTIC SUITE IS PACKED WITH THE MOST *SOPHISTICATED* MEDICAL INSTRUMENTATION THAT DOLLARS CAN BUY.

THE AXIAL TOMOGRAPHS REPEATEDLY GAVE *ANOMALOUS* READINGS. THE BIO-MED SCANNERS SIMPLY *REFUSED* TO REGISTER YOU.

THEN THERE ARE THESE *MARKINGS* ON YOUR SKIN.

BELIEVE ME, MARTELL... YOU DON'T *WANT* TO KNOW ABOUT THIS.

I'LL BE THE JUDGE OF THAT.

I GOT ENOUGH DATA BACK TO ESTABLISH THAT YOU *HAVE* TIME-QUAKE TISSUE DAMAGE.

BUT *SOMETHING'S* HOLDING IT IN CHECK. SOMETHING... *ODD*. I--

RAE!

OH, MY *GOD*. I DIDN'T EXPECT...

EVIDENTLY.

JIM? RHODEY?

I'LL -UH- LEAVE YOU TO IT...

THAT'D BE *WISE*, MARTELL.

SO, ANYWAY...

... HOW'VE YOU BEEN?

LONELY.

SORRY.

THAT WAS CHEAP...

... I'M NOT HERE TO SCORE POINTS. I'M NOT HERE FOR *YOU* AT ALL.

HOW'S SHEVA?

SHE COULD BE *BETTER.*

...THEY DON'T THINK ITS *TREAT-ABLE.*

SHE'LL JUST *DEGENERATE* UNTIL HER BODY IS TOO WEAK TO CONTINUE. EXPOSURE TO THE *CHRONAL ENERGY* HAS ACCELERATED THE RATE OF AGING IN HER CEL-LULAR STRUCTURE AND SO...

... AND SO...

... *RAE*. I DON'T EXPECT YOU TO FORGIVE ME FOR JUST *DROPPING* OUT OF YOUR LIFE.

I DON'T EVEN KNOW *HOW* TO EXPLAIN. I DON'T KNOW WHAT--

IT WAS *NEW YEAR. PHILADELPHIA.*

I FLEW OUT FROM THE COAST TO MEET YOUR *FOLKS*. I THOUGHT THAT WAS A SIGN OUR RELATION-SHIP WAS REALLY *GOING SOMEWHERE*. "HEY, MOM AND DAD... THIS IS *MY GIRL*, RAE..."*

OUR RELATION-SHIP WAS *GOING* SOMEWHERE, ALL RIGHT. TO *HELL* IN A *HANDBASKET.*

* IN WAR MACHINE #12.

YOU NEVER CAME BACK. YOU STRANDED ME THERE WITH YOUR PARENTS WHO, FRANKLY, COULDN'T HAVE BEEN *LESS* FRIENDLY.

THAT WAS THE LAST TIME I SAW YOU.

THINGS HAVE BEEN... *COMPLI-CATED...*

BULL! YOU COULDN'T CALL? NOT ONCE? NOT ONCE IN ALL THIS TIME?

WERE YOU SO BUSY LAST NIGHT? THE NIGHT BEFORE?

I WAS -UH-

... I WAS SAVING THE WORLD.

OH, *JIM!*

AT *LEAST* HAVE THE DECENCY TO LIE *CONVINCINGLY!*

RAE, *PLEASE!*

IT'S BEEN *CRAZY* RECENTLY. SO MUCH *STUFF* GOING DOWN.

THERE ARE THINGS I NEED TO TELL YOU, ABOUT *TONY*, ABOUT-

OH, *BELIEVE ME*, I *KNOW* YOU'VE GOT PLENTY OF THINGS TO GET OFF YOUR CHEST!

WHERE SHALL WE START?

OH, *I* KNOW! WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME *ALL* ABOUT...

...YOUR *SON?*

MY

MY

WHAT?!

MR. RHODES!

PLEASE! COME QUICKLY!

I DON'T *BELIEVE*...

AS YOU CAN SEE...

... THERE'S BEEN SOMETHING OF A *CHANGE* IN THE PATIENT'S CONDITION.

AMAZING WHAT A COUPLE ASPIRIN AND GOOD LIE DOWN WILL DO, HUH?

YOU DON'T GET RID OF ME *THAT* EASY.

MR. RHODES?

THIS *REMISSION* STATE MAY ONLY BE *TEMPORARY.*

LOOK, I DON'T WANT TO SOUND LIKE A KILLJOY...

... BUT WE REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH HERE. MEDICALLY, THIS IS NEW COUNTRY.

I WANT YOU TO BE AWARE OF THAT.

CHANGE THE SUBJECT, RAE. YOU TALKING TO HIM YET?

HMMM. *SERIOUS* FACES OVER THERE.

I DON'T WANT TO *KNOW* WHAT SHE'S TELLING HIM.

UH-HUH.

TOO MUCH, MAYBE...

DAWN.

THE ONE THE MEDICS DIDN'T THINK SHE'D SEE.

SO HOW YOU DOING?

WELL, FOR ONE THING, I'M SICK OF TALKING ABOUT *ME*.

TELL ME ABOUT REAL LIFE. ABOUT YOU AND RAE. SHE GONE NOW?

SHE'LL DROP BACK LATER. I HAVE TO TALK TO HER. ABOUT... ALL *KINDSA* STUFF.

LIKE... BEING A *FATHER*?

SHE *TOLD* YOU?

I MET HER AT A RESTAURANT, THE NIGHT I FIRST GOT *ILL*.*

SHE SAID YOUR FOLKS HAD TOLD HER YOU HAD A CHILD, A BOY BY ANOTHER WOMAN FROM A FEW YEARS BACK.

THAT TRUE?

* WM #19.

IT'S NEWS TO ME. I DUNNO...

I COULDN'T GET OVER THE WAY MY FOLKS SEEMED TO *DISAPPROVE* OF ME HAVING A *WHITE* GIRLFRIEND.

BUT THIS SEEMS A REAL *ELABORATE* WAY OF SCARING HER OFF...

GUESS I'LL FIGURE IT ALL OUT IN TIME.

BUMMER.

WHAT ELSE? HOW'VE YOU BEEN SINCE CHILE? HAVE YOU GOT USED TO BEING *PLAIN* JIM RHODES AGAIN? WITHOUT THE ARMOR?

ACTUALLY...

... LIFE'S MOVED *PRETTY FAST.* I GOT A *NEW SUIT.* FANCY STUFF... AND A LITTLE TOO COMPLICATED TO EXPLAIN RIGHT HERE.

IT... *HIDES* INSIDE ME. LEAVES THESE MARKS, THESE *MANDALAS,* ON MY SKIN.

I'M WAR MACHINE AGAIN.

AND I'VE BEEN FIGHTING A GENUINE *WAR*... ALONGSIDE THE AVENGERS AND FORCE WORKS... AGAINST...

... AGAINST MY *OLDEST* FRIEND.

IT'S BEEN A *HECK* OF A FEW WEEKS.

TELL ME ABOUT IT.

THAT'S HIM.

NOW, YOU'RE SURE ABOUT ALL THIS, CLAYDEN?

OH, *QUITE* SURE, SIR...

... THE TEST RESULTS WERE *UNQUESTIONABLE.*

JAMES RHODES IS SOMEHOW *BONDED* TO A PIECE OF *ALIEN TECHNOLOGY.*

I SEE.

YOU WERE RIGHT TO CALL ME. THIS'LL HAVE TO BE HANDLED CAREFULLY.

YES, SIR.

CLAYDEN? HAVE YOU GOT THOSE--

OH.

SHIELD

GOOD TO SEE YOU, MARTELL.

GROOMP?

WHAT THE BLAZES ARE *YOU* DOING HERE?

WE'RE A *PAIR*, AREN'T WE, RHODES?

NOTHING'S EVER SIMPLE.

WOULD YOU REALLY WANT AN *EASY* LIFE?

GIVE ME "INTERESTING TIMES", JUST LIKE THAT OLD *CURSE*.

SHEVA?

OH, NO. *SHEVA.*

THINK MY INTERESTING TIMES ARE *UP*, JIM...

... YOU'D BETTER GET ME INSIDE.

MEDICS! QUICKLY!

HELP ME!

DOUBLE TIME! MOVE IT! GET HER TO ISOLATION!

SHE'S *FADING!*

THERE'S A MARKED DETERIORATION IN HER CELLULAR STABILITY!

GET HER THROUGH TO ISO!

LET ME GO WITH HER! I--

RHODES!

LET ME SPELL IT OUT! YOU'D BE IN THE SAME STATE AS HER IF IT WASN'T FOR THE *EXOTIC TECHNOLOGY* WE FOUND INSIDE YOU!

I RESPECT YOUR NEED FOR *PRIVACY*, BUT *PLEASE!* IS THERE *ANYTHING* YOU CAN TELL US THAT WE COULD USE TO HELP SHEVA?

NO, BLAST IT! I DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS STUFF MYSELF!

IS THIS WHAT SKYE MEANT WHEN SHE SAID I'D NEVER BE FREE OF THE WARWEAR... BECAUSE I'D DIE IF I EVER TOOK IT OFF?

JIM?

JEFFERIES! RAE!

RAE BROUGHT ME IN TO VISIT SHEVA, BUT THE MAIN DESK SAID SHE'D JUST BEEN RUSHED TO INTENSIVE CARE.

HOW IS SHE?

SHE'S SUFFERED A MAJOR RELAPSE. WE'RE WAITING FOR NEWS.

THIS CONDITION IS A DIRECT RESULT OF HER INVOLVEMENT WITH THE SHIELD OPERATION IN CHILE, ISN'T IT? SHIELD IS DUTY-BOUND TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT REPARATIONS...

I'M SURE SHEVA DOESN'T CARE ABOUT THE MONEY!

YES, I'M SURE SHE DOESN'T.

I WAS JUST TRYING TO THINK OF SOMETHING TO SAY...

RHODES... PLEASE. LET US RUN SOME MORE TESTS ON YOU. IF WE COULD DUPLICATE THE PROCESS THAT'S KEEPING YOU ALIVE...

OKAY, OKAY... TRY ANYTHING... DO IT!

I'M AFRAID THAT WON'T BE POSSIBLE, MARTELL.

MR. RHODES IS TOO *VALUABLE* TO FIDDLE WITH.

GROOM! *NO!* NOT *NOW!*

YOU'RE COMING WITH US, MR RHODES.

I'M NOT GOING *ANYWHERE*, PAL.

MY *FRIEND* NEEDS ME.

I'M NOT PLAYING GAMES, MR RHODES...

... MOVE!

STEP ASIDE, JERK...

... OR I'LL GO *THROUGH* YOU!

HEAVENS!

J-JIM?

OH, MY GOD!

I... I... I...

SHEVA?

CAN YOU HEAR ME, BABE?

... I CAN'T SEE YOU, JIM...

I'M RIGHT HERE, SHEVA...

...RIGHT BY YOUR SIDE.

...JIM...

WE...WE MIGHT HAVE A ***BREAK,*** BABE. THEY'RE GONNA DO SOME TESTS ON ME...

... KIRBY MARTELL RECKONS THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO DUPLICATE WHATEVER IT IS INSIDE ME THAT'S STOPPED ME GETTING SICK THE SAME WAY.

YOU JUST GOTTA HOLD ON TILL THEN.

Y-YOU AND YOUR FAMOUS *LAST MINUTE RESCUES,* RHODES...

SOME HERO, HUH?

NOT *YOUR* FAULT, JIM...

... 'FRAID I'M JUST OUT OF TIME.

Bfffffffffffffffffffff

NEXT
Endings